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Kissinger Urged China to Free Captives

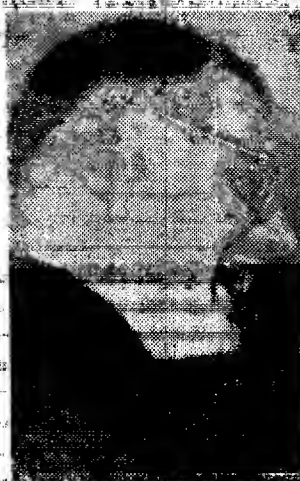
PRISONERS, From AI
Intelligence Agency oper-
engaged in setting up
bases in northeast

Convicted by the Chinese in
1962, Fecteau was sentenced to
years' imprisonment and
Downey was given a life term.
Downey was scheduled for re-
lease next year. Downey's
commutation will make him
release in five years.

Announcing the changes in
sentences, Peking's offi-
cial China News Agency
said on Sunday that the "two
prisoners" had "admitted their
mistakes during their trials and
their behavior was not bad
while serving their terms."

Miss Harbert was arrested
by the Chinese in 1960 when
she and a companion, Gerald
Rosa McLaughlin, drifted into
China's waters off southern
Guangdong Province while
riding their yacht from Hong
Kong to Manila.

The New China News
Agency said on Sunday that
Miss Harbert's release fol-
lowed the conversion of her
sentence. The agency re-
vealed, however, that Mc-
Laughlin had committed sui-



John Downey, left, whose life sentence was commuted
by Peking, and Richard Fecteau, who was released.

icide in March, 1969, adding
that he had "behaved badly,
resisted investigation" and
taken "the warders unawares."
Believed Lost at Sea

The Chinese had not dis-
closed the arrest of the couple
prior to their announcement
of Miss Harbert's release on
Sunday. Until then, they were
presumed to have been lost at
sea.

Two other American prison-
ers still being held in China
are Air Force Maj. Philip E.
Smith, whose F-104 went down
over southern Hainan Island
in September, 1965, and Navy
Lt. Robert J. Flynn, a crew
member aboard an A-1 that
crashed over China's southern-
most province of Kwangsi in
August 1967.

Some sources believe that
the two U.S. military
men were captured in connec-
tion with missions in the Viet-
nam area. The sources will re-

on American POWs now held
by North Vietnam.

Among the other U.S. citi-
zens being detained in China
are Americans who sympa-
thized with the Communist re-
gime and ran afoul of its polit-
ical zigzags. These include
Sydney Rittenberg, a propa-
gandist in Peking who joined
the Red Guards during Mao
Tse-tung's Cultural Revolution
and was later accused of "ul-
tra-leftism."

Praises President

Sen. Edward M. Kennedy
(D-Mass.) called the release of
the Americans "one of the
most important symbols of the
emerging era of improved re-
lations between our two coun-
tries." Kennedy said further
that the President "deserves
the highest praise" for secur-
ing their release.

In Lynn, Mass., one of Fec-
teau's twin daughters posted a
hand-lettered sign on a garage
door, reading: "My Dad's
Home at Last." Fecteau and

his wife, Mrs. Margaret Fec-
teau, were divorced in 1951.

Mary Ann Harbert's sister,
Mrs. Sue Carrington of Moun-
tain View, Calif., said on hear-
ing the news: "We're walking
on air."

In Washington, meanwhile,
a cousin of John T. Downey
has asked Mr. Nixon to urge
the Chinese leaders when he
visits Peking in February to
release Downey under presi-
dential custody.

Sean Downey of McLean,
Va., expressed the belief in an
interview yesterday that the
Chinese might free his cousin
if the President concedes that
Downey was indeed a CIA op-
erative when he was captured.
"That approach would give the
Chinese an opportunity to
save face," Downey explained.

Talks in Ottawa

Downey said that the
Chinese ambassador to Can-
ada, Huang Hua, had indicated
during a conversation they
had in Ottawa in October that
John Downey's chances of re-
lease might be improved if the
United States acknowledged
that he had been working for
the CIA.

Harvard Law School Prof.
Jerome A. Cohen made a simi-
lar proposal to the White
House in July after discussing
the prisoner issue with
Chinese diplomats in Canada.
Cohen, who was a classmate of
Downey at Yale, said at the
time that his suggestion had
received "working-level" en-
dorsement within the adminis-
tration.

It is not known whether Kis-
singer conceded in his conver-
sations that Fecteau and Dow-
ney had been CIA employees.
But Cohen, an expert in
Chinese law, has been in occa-
sional contact with Kissinger.